

POP NEWS

ISSUE 1

Message from the Scientific Director

It is a great pleasure to launch the first issue of your newsletter – POP news!...One way to learn about the CIHR, the Institute of Population and Public Health (IPPH), its priorities, directions and activities. It is also a forum for sharing success stories, lessons learned, as well as an opportunity to showcase recent workshops, research findings and events that are helping to contribute to the advancement of population and public health (PPH) research and knowledge exchange locally and globally.

The Institute of Population and Public Health has a very integrative mission – to support research into the complex interactions (biological, social, cultural, environmental), which determine the health of individuals, communities, and global populations; and, the application of that knowledge to improve the health of both populations and individuals. Developed under the guidance of the Institute's Advisory Board, the Institute's Strategic Plan outlines the mission, vision, research priorities and key actions of IPPH. The Plan is based on a national consultation process with over 400 stakeholders, conducted in collaboration with the Canadian Insti-

tute for Health Information – Canadian Population Health Initiative (CPHI). The results are summarized in Charting the Course: A Pan-Canadian Consultation on Population and Public Health Priorities.

This first issue looks at recent IPPH-funded workshops, documents and publications as well as a more indepth look at our inaugural Summer Institute and global health. I'm sure you will find many point that will be of interest to you.

In closing, I would like to sincerely acknowledge the many individuals who made this issue possible. We look forward to getting your feedback on how useful this newsletter is to you and your colleagues. As always, please be in touch with Institute staff (see page 4 for a list of staff) if we can be of any assistance.

Warm regards,



Suite 207-L,
Banting Building
100 College Street
Toronto, ON M5G 1L5

416 946-7878 (tel)
416 946-7984 (fax)

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IPPH Mission

The CIHR Institute of Population and Public Health will support :

- 1) research into the complex interactions (biological, social, cultural, environmental), which determine the health of individuals, communities and global populations; and,
- 2) the application of that knowledge to improve the health of both populations and individuals, through strategic partnerships with populations and public health stakeholders, and innovative research funding programs.



Literacy and Health : Setting Priorities in Canada

The Literacy and Health Workshop: Setting Priorities in Canada took place in October 2002 in Ottawa. Participants included approximately 35 researchers, practitioners, policymakers and "learners" interested in Literacy and Health from across the country as well as two participants from the United States.

"...participants reached agreement on a set of priority research themes and questions."

The purpose of the workshop was to define an agenda for research on Literacy and Health in Canada. Specifically, it intended to develop: a consensus on priority research questions on Literacy and Health pertinent to Canada; proposals for CIHR funding; and, a proposal for a future IPPH strategic initiative

on Literacy and Health Research.

At the conclusion of the conference, participants reached agreement on a set of priority research themes and questions. In addition, ideas for research proposals were generated and support was given to encourage IPPH to develop a strategic initiative on Literacy and Health research, in partnership with the Institutes of Aboriginal Peoples' Health and Gender and Health, and possibly other CIHR sponsoring Institutes. Implications for policy and practice were also identified.

The workshop report is available on the National Literacy and Health Program Web-site (www.cpha.ca).

Submitted by:
Irving Rootman, PhD, Principal Investigator, Canadian Literacy and Health Research Program, University of Victoria (irootman@uvic.ca)

Behavioural and Social Sciences Health Research in Canada

The "Behavioural and Social Sciences Health Research in Canada: Building an Integrated Future" workshop saw 32 of our country's leading behavioural and social science health researchers gather in Vancouver in September 2002. Their challenge: develop strategies for promoting and coordinating transdisciplinary behavioural and social science health research (BSSHR) in Canada.

During two days of lively discussions, participants identified five key challenges for BSSHR funding and productivity: Vision/Leadership, Integration/Collaboration, Capacity Building, Peer Review, Delivering the Goods/Increasing Impact. They also created action plans for all five areas.

Immediate goals are to complete a scan of BSSHR funders' strategic priorities, survey the BSSHR research community to assess existing capacity, and to produce a policy paper addressing the question, "Is the Behavioural, Social Sciences and Humanities Health Research (BSSH-HR) related transformation of Canadian Health Research on

track?"

An Interim Steering Committee is overseeing start-up activities including the actions identified in the five priority areas. Committee members include John Eyles, McMaster University, John Frank, Canadian Institutes of Health Research - Institute of Population and Public Health, Elinor Wilson, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, and Allan Best, Vancouver Hospital and Health Sciences Centre.

For additional information, or to subscribe to bi-monthly email updates, contact the Secretariat at gmoor@vanhosp.bc.ca.

Submitted by:

Greg Moor, Project Coordinator, Centre for Clinical Epidemiology and Evaluation, Vancouver Hospital and Health Centre (gmoor@vanhosp.bc.ca)

Allan Best PhD, Senior Scientist, Centre for Clinical Epidemiology and Evaluation, Vancouver Hospital and Health Centre (abest@vanhosp.bc.ca)

IPPH Funding Opportunities

The following two strategic funding opportunities are currently being offered by IPPH:

Safe Food and Water Initiative

Microbial Contamination of Food and Water and Antimicrobial Resistance in the Food Chain

Phase II - Establishing a Framework in collaboration with the CIHR Institute of Infection and Immunity

Letter of Intent: February 1, 2003 *Full Proposal:* June 1, 2003

Population-based Health and Health Service Data in Canada: Current Status and Future Health Research Potential

Full Proposal: March 15, 2003

For more information about these funding opportunities, or to view the Request for Applications, please visit http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/institutes/ipph/funding/2002_opportunities_e.shtml

Building Capacity: The IPPH Inaugural Summer Institute

One of the CIHR-Institute of Population and Public Health's (IPPH) strategic research priorities, is capacity-building. The capacity for cutting-edge and relevant research, and for its use by decision-makers, needs to be strengthened in Canada, through the use of different capacity-building strategies that respond to the varying needs of researchers, policy makers and practitioners. In response to this need, IPPH held their Inaugural Summer Institute in June 2002, involving 8 tutors and 25 student participants. This event is one of many strategic capacity-building activities of the IPPH to foster the creation and maintenance of complex interdisciplinary research teams by engaging program stakeholders to improve research trainees' understanding and skills in research transfer and partnership building.

The theme of *Doing Interdisciplinary Partnered Health Research* was selected, given the growing international tendency in health research granting agencies, including CIHR, to issue requests for applications for initiatives involving several academic disciplines, "mixed methods" and the active engagement of research users. By bringing together doctorate students, post-doctorate students and researchers, the Summer Institute facilitated connections between researchers at different stages in their career. In addition, the Summer Institute intended to raise the participants' comfort level of the values and perspectives of other disciplines within and outside the research community.

While at the Summer Institute, participants had the opportunity to interact with one another as well as with researchers from across Canada, who are currently involved in interdisciplinary partnered research projects, such as the Community Alliances for Health Research (CAHR) and Interdisciplinary Health Research Teams (IHRT), with a focus on population and public health. Students had the opportunity to learn how interdisciplinary research can be facilitated in different contexts, the challenges faced and effective strategies to involve a variety of stakeholders in research and its translation into policy and practice. The participants and tutors represented a variety of disciplines and fields of practices, including; Epidemiology, Community Health, Infectious Diseases, Social Sciences, Public Health, Sociology, Geography and Nursing. The relaxed, casual, and stimulating setting of the Summer Institute provided an ideal occasion to facilitate networking and brainstorming between individuals, thus forging connections between participants, which are expected to continue to develop after the Summer Institute.

Some highlights included a keynote presentation by Steven Lewis of Access Consulting Ltd. on bridging the gap between research and policy, as well as a presentation by Terry Sullivan, Cancer Care Ontario and Cam Mustard, Institute of Work and Health on knowledge transfer.

Students also had the opportunity to participate in a small group activity to develop an outline for a long-term program of research that utilized an approach to foster interdisciplinarity and linkages with relevant research users to facilitate knowledge exchange. Groups reflected the multidisciplinary nature of the Institute and impressed all present with their ideas, creativity and approach to research during the presentation of their outlines for long-term programs of research.

All in all, the Summer Institute was extremely well received by participants and tutors alike. Building off of this success, IPPH is pleased that a second Summer Institute is being planned for summer 2003 in Quebec. IPPH is looking forward to incorporating suggestions and ideas from the inaugural event, to ensure that the second Summer Institute is just as well received.

"I plan to act on things I've learned and maintain contact with several other participants"

Summer Institute Student

IPPH Publications

The following publications are available in both print and electronic form. To download a pdf or html file of these documents, please visit our website at http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/institutes/ipph/publications/index_e.shtml.

Mapping and Tapping the Wellsprings of Health Strategic Plan 2002 – 2007

Mapping and Tapping the Wellsprings of Health Executive Summary 2002 – 2007

Institute of Population and Public Health Annual Report - January 2001 – March 2002

Charting The Course

Building Public Health Research, Education and Development in Canada: A Five Site Consultation

Summary Report Inaugural Summer Institute, available mid-February, 2003.



IPPH Staff

Toronto-based IPPH Staff:

John Frank
Scientific Director
john.frank@utoronto.ca

Erica Di Ruggiero
Assistant Director
e.diruggiero@utoronto.ca

Vera Ndaba
Financial/Event Officer
v.ndaba@utoronto.ca

Gail D. Bryant
Executive Assistant
gail.bryant@utoronto.ca

Ottawa-based IPPH Staff:

Michelle Gagnon
Sr. Associate, Partnerships and
Knowledge Translation/
CIHR-IHSPR & CIHR-IPPH
mgagnon@cihr-irsc.gc.ca

Michèle O'Rourke
Associate, Strategic Initiatives/
CIHR-IHSPR & CIHR-IPPH
morourke@cihr-irsc.gc.ca

CIHR—Institute of Population &
Public Health

Suite 207-L
Banting Building
100 College Street
Toronto, ON M5G 1L5

Phone: 416-946-7878

Fax: 416-946-7984

http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/institutes/ipph/index_e.shtml



CIHR IRSC

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

THE COALITION FOR GLOBAL HEALTH RESEARCH - CANADA (CGHRC)

Since mid-2001, IPPH'S Scientific Director John Frank, has been actively championing one of CIHR's nine new cross-cutting initiatives, in Global Health Research. This initiative is aimed at strengthening Canada's capacity for collaborative research into the health problems, and health-care challenges, of lower and middle-income countries. The initiative has its roots in a historically unprecedented Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed in 2001 by CIHR, Health Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency and the International Development Research Centre in Ottawa. Over the last 18 months, the initial membership of this partnership has expanded to include other organizations, NGOs and researchers from across Canada – together constituting the Coalition for Global Health Research – Canada (CGHRC). A regularly updated account of the Coalition's activities is found at its website: www.cghrc.ca.

Recently, several members of the CGHRC Steering Committee attended the sixth Global Forum for Health Research (GFHR) in Arusha, Tanzania. The goal of the GFHR is "... to help correct the 10/90 gap in health research." This gap refers to the fact that less than 10% of the world's health research resources are directed at the health problems of the developing world, where 90% of the world's burden of ill health occurs.

The Arusha meeting was the first Global Forum meeting to be held in Africa. It attracted more than 700 participants from dozens of countries, including a strong representation from the East African health research community. A key event was the official launching of the newly formed African Forum for Health Research (AfHRF). A very productive series of discussions between CGHRC and AfHRF representatives were held, to plan a novel, bilingual program of Africa-based leadership training for senior personnel in African health research institutions, together with their governmental and "civil society" counterparts in the research-user communities of each participating country.

The Coalition's direct contributions to the meeting included:

-A very well received plenary presentation about the CGHRC, as a possible

model for the national coordination of health-research-related development assistance and collaboration, by Jerry Spiegel and John Frank (who dusted off his Swahili for the trip!).

- A very active display table

- Seminal contributions to the final "feedback" plenary session (on behalf of the Canadian delegation) by Jeff Reading, of the CIHR-Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health, and Betsy McGregor of the CIHR Institute of Gender and Health.

A number of strong impressions are left with those of us fortunate enough to have participated in this often deeply-moving experience:

-Canada's "role" within the global health community: our health care system is widely looked up to as an exemplar of a national, publicly-funded, comprehensive system. We are expected to play a role in helping other countries find a sustainable development path of this kind, but we must work harder at "delivering these goods" than we have in the past.

-The extraordinary energy, optimism and competence of our African colleagues, in the face of worse health problems on their continent than ever before: Some attendees visited a local district disease and demographic surveillance project and spoke to citizens and health professionals. The toll of HIV/AIDS in the community is devastating. We were humbled to see the vigor with which the epidemic is being fought, albeit with generally inadequate technical resources. We were left with a renewed sense of commitment to work together with our African colleagues on these problems, and great admiration for their bravery in the face of extreme adversity.

-The need for coordinated Canadian action, in both research collaboration abroad, and overseas development assistance in the health sector: Canada's national health research, policy and international assistance agencies have a unique opportunity, through the Coalition, to bring coordinated, effective, evidence-based programs to bear on these countries' urgent health problems – and the world is watching us closely.